## WHAT PARENTS NEED ... AND WHAT WORKS!

#### PARENTS...

- are looking for answers.
- have many needs.
- may be experiencing a number of troubling and conflicting feelings love, anger, anxiety, grief, guilt, fear, depression, etc.
- often feel isolated and alone; as if they were the only family having difficulties.
- are often receiving ill-timed or poor advice from a multitude of people.
- are probably not aware of programs and services that may be available to them in their community.
- may need to realize the scope and limitations of their responsibility and learn to take care of themselves as well as their child.
- want to talk.
- need someone to just listen.

### WHAT WORKS...

- INFORMATION, INFORMATION, INFORMATION!!! Be a "connector." Help parents find information, resources, services and programs.
- Connect parents with other parents -- help them find successful mentors.
- Ask parents what they need and what they want.
- Help parents learn about their child abilities and needs -- knowledge is important!
- Help parents prepare and share the information they have about their child and family.
- Parents want to be equal partners -- they want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.
   Parents must sense a feeling of mutual respect (no guilt, no blame, build trust) in decision-making processes.
- Accept the knowledge that parents have about their child and remember that parents see their child as a whole person.
- Be open to differences. Fathers and mothers, all family structures, different cultures, values and needs, should all be included. Be non-judgmental.
- Don't feel threatened by knowledgeable, assertive parents.
- Be an active collaborator that will assist with communication between and among all service providers for the child and family.
- ★ Help parents see possibilities!





### SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS...

- Always trust your instincts! If you think you need another opinion, ask for it. If you think something in particular would help, propose it.
- It is essential to look after your own needs and well-being too. Recognize that support and breaks
  are indispensable to remain healthy enough to survive and to contribute to solutions.
- Have a sense of humor -- it can make almost anything less threatening.
- Give yourself a healthy outlet for negative feelings that are so normal: anger, fear, frustration, and grief.
- Learn about your child's abilities and needs, learn how to work effectively with them.
- There is power in numbers -- join with other families to advocate for accessible, appropriate, family
  -centered, community-based programs, services and supports.
- Remember the importance of open communication between the home, school and community so
  that programs and services can be effectively coordinated. You will need to play an important
  role in facilitating relationships.
- Be sure to communicate to your child that he/she is not the cause of your frustration, anger, and
  other negative feelings -- it is the behavior, the disorder, the difficulty in getting the right services, the lack of support, and so on.
- Keep the lines of communication open within your family.
- Remember, you are your child's best advocate -- speak up! You have information that no one else
  has -- share what you know about your child.

# NOTES AND OTHER IDEAS FOR PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS...



